

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 3230,  
PAY OUR GUARD AND RESERVE  
ACT

SPEECH OF

**HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN**

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, July 30, 2014*

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Conference Report on H.R. 3230, the Veterans' Access to Care through Choice, Accountability, and Transparency Act of 2014. I also want to commend Chairman SANDERS, Chairman MILLER, Ranking Member BURR, and Ranking Member MICHAUD for their work on crafting a bipartisan bill that not only provides for our veterans but addresses many of the systemic problems within the Veteran Health Administration.

The final conference agreement provides over \$17 billion in funding for the Department of Veteran Affairs. This includes \$10 billion in funding to allow veterans who live more than 40 miles away from a VA facility, or who have waited more than 30 days for an appointment at a VA medical center, to seek care with an outside provider. In addition, it provides the VA with \$6.5 billion in funding to address its critical shortage of doctors and nurses and to allow the VA to enter into 27 new medical facility leases. By expanding access to care, increasing staffing needs, and authorizing new clinics, this bill is a great first step in tackling many of the ongoing problems that have surfaced at the VA in recent years.

The Conference Report strengthens a number of other programs to help support our veterans and their families. It expands eligibility and provides veterans who experienced military sexual trauma while on inactive duty the opportunity to seek sexual trauma counseling. It also modifies the Post 9/11 GI Bill and allows veterans to receive in-state tuition rates at any public university, if they decide to relocate. Finally, today's legislation extends an important program set to expire later this year to provide housing for veterans struggling with traumatic brain injuries.

I do, however, have reservations about a provision in this bill which gives the VA Secretary broad authority to fire Senior Executive Service (SES) employees even though the VA already has tools to remove SES employees who are rated unsatisfactory. However, I am encouraged that—unlike legislation that passed the House earlier this year—the conference agreement does provide SES employees with an expedited appeals process through a Merit Systems Protection Board.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more important than providing for those who have sacrificed so much for our country. I encourage my colleagues to join me in support of this bill.

IN RECOGNITION OF MARGARET  
EDGE CHALFANT

**HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 31, 2014*

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Margaret Edge Chalfant for a noteworthy career dedicated to the advancement

of the arts. After almost a decade as Executive Director of the Greater Denton Arts Council (GDAC), Ms. Chalfant is retiring from her distinguished service at the helm of the non-profit organization.

Margaret Chalfant's successful leadership at the GDAC began in 2005; in that same year, she was selected to attend the Women's Leadership Summit in Washington, DC. During her GDAC tenure, she has expanded and enhanced its permanent collection, upgraded and updated the physical facilities, and highlighted the importance of the arts through education outreach to students from the elementary level through college. She instituted an After School Arts program for Denton ISD schools, hosted An Artistic Discovery—the 26th Congressional district's annual high school art contest, and collaborated with the University of North Texas and Texas Woman's University to initiate the Getting Started with the Arts program. Throughout her career she has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the arts, as well as engaging in multiple civic activities to benefit the Denton community and the North Texas region.

The sterling reputation of the Greater Denton Arts Council is a reflection of the outstanding administration of Ms. Chalfant, and her professional legacy will continue to benefit the citizens of Denton for years to come. I join her colleagues and the community in commending the Greater Denton Arts Council's Executive Director, Margaret Edge Chalfant, for her outstanding record and extend best wishes upon her retirement. It is my privilege to represent the City of Denton in the U.S. House of Representatives.

RECOGNIZING THE  
CHOCTAWHATCHEE CHEER-  
LEADERS AS 1A SMALL CO-ED  
DIVISION STATE CHAMPIONS

**HON. JEFF MILLER**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 31, 2014*

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to congratulate the First Congressional District of Florida's Choctawhatchee Senior High School Indians for winning the 1A Small Co-ed Division State title at the Florida High School Athletic Association Cheerleading State Championship on January 31, 2014 for the third year in a row.

Located in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, Choctawhatchee High School boasts an exceptional cheer squad, led by coaches Shaunice Clay and Hailey Looney. During the preliminaries, the squad ranked 1st out of a total of fourteen squads before claiming victory over Harmony High School and Gulf Breeze High School.

I commend the following young men and women of the squad for both challenging themselves and inspiring their fellow students and youth throughout our community: Jenna Angelos, Jean Bernier, Megan Bradley, Loren Burkett, Olivia Carr, Kacey Childers, Dani Connelly, Alexia Faustinella, Shayla Fish, Tiffany Fought, Zach Given, Anna Greene, Rielly Griggs, Holly King, Kerri Kriech, Amy LeMenager, Rachel Loughney, CJ McDonald, Emily McGaughy, Johnny Mundy, Temple Nichols, Ashley Oliver, Sydney Pattison, Alli-

son Plantz, Storme Rynearson, Emory Shelton, Olivia Sims, Tristin Stevens, Mark Thomas Walker, Shane Wright, and Rachelle Wyatt. Choctawhatchee Senior High School's victory at the Florida High School Athletic Association Cheerleading State Championship is a true testament to the commitment and dedication of all the members of the squad, and it is a great reflection on Fort Walton Beach and the greater Northwest Florida community.

On behalf of the United States Congress, my wife Vicki and I congratulate the Indians for their extraordinary victory and wish them all the best for their continued success.

ON ADDRESSING THE HUMANI-  
TARIAN CRISIS ON OUR BORDER

**HON. AL GREEN**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 31, 2014*

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I support Comprehensive Immigration Reform, which would secure our borders, create a pathway to citizenship, and provides for electronic employment verification. I believe more than ever after having seen the humanitarian consequences of the crisis firsthand, we must act now. Having a broken system that is in dire need of reform only exacerbates the issue.

However, I oppose H.R. 5230, Making supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2014, and for other purposes, and H.R. 5272, To prohibit certain actions with respect to deferred action for aliens not lawfully present in the United States, and for other purposes. These bills do not adequately address the problems in our immigration system or deal with the current influx of unaccompanied minors. These bills will also end protections that have provided relief to millions of people currently living in the U.S.

H.R. 5230 emasculates current anti-trafficking law, meant to protect minors from certain countries and allow them to apply for asylum in this country. The bill provides a fraction of the \$3.7 billion requested by President Obama to address the humanitarian crisis at our border. The bill would likely produce simulated hearings with fast-track adjudication that mimics due process for unaccompanied minors.

H.R. 5272 eviscerates the vital Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which has provided much needed relief for millions of undocumented immigrants who arrived in this country as minors. DACA allows the Department of Homeland Security prosecutorial discretion towards some undocumented immigrants who immigrated to our nation as children not of their own volition.

Mr. Speaker, the humanitarian crisis caused by an influx of unaccompanied minors from mostly Central American countries with staggering crime rates has tested our nation's laws and values. We are a nation of laws but we are also a nation of values. We must treat all individuals, especially minors, in a way that is consistent with our values.